

**SB 414: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING GENEALOGISTS' ACCESS TO VITAL RECORDS.**

The current statute states that genealogists have access to “all vital records in the custody of any registrar of vital statistics, including certificates, ledgers, record books, card files, indexes and database printouts **"during all normal business hours."**

The proposed legislation **would delete “during all normal business hours”** and would add this sentence:

"A registrar of vital statistics may grant a genealogist immediate access to such records or may require a genealogist to schedule an appointment to access such records, at the registrar's discretion. A registrar requiring an appointment for access to such records shall schedule such appointment as soon as reasonably practicable."

I believe this legislation is wrong for at least these 4 reasons:

- 1) **It would single out a particular class of American citizens (genealogists) whether acting from an avocation or conducting a business, for adverse treatment.**

This is unacceptable.

Others who regularly make records requests of registrars (attorneys, funeral directors, title searchers, real estate agents, heads of municipalities, soccer moms, veterans, medical researchers, officials from state & federal agencies and departments, police departments, adoption agencies, statisticians, newspaper reporters, authors, biographers and other members of the general public) would not be adversely affected by this legislation – just genealogists.

*Really? Have genealogists been swarming offices like locusts? (If they are behaving rudely, there are other remedies for that.)*

*Those requesting paper copies of documents for any reason no doubt pay a fee for that service; doesn't Connecticut need that revenue, which would come both from state citizens and others?*

- 2) It would gut the existing provision regarding “normal business hours” access; **that right was emphasized in the revised 1996 legislation BECAUSE registrars were unfairly treating genealogists as if their requests were “frivolous,” whereas the business of others was “serious.”**

Genealogists should be served on a first-come/first-served basis like everyone else.

*Not special nor lesser treatment; equal treatment.*

3) It would allow all registrars the power to put off for days, weeks, or longer any researcher wishing to legally access the public (death, marriage, land, and all other) records of our government until they deem it is "reasonably practicable."

***How would any registrar know that a private citizen (that is, not one representing an agency) is asking "as a genealogist" or has another reason for the request, such as putting their affairs in order before surgery?***

***How could a registrar know how time-sensitive a request might be, given the age & health of the requestor?***

***Will the revised law define the term: "reasonably practicable"?***

*It's tricky when writing contracts/agreements in generalities to give flexibility and limit it at the same time.*

***What is the route of APPEAL if a particular registrar puts off a request repeatedly until that amounts to "indefinitely"?***

4) It would demand that all genealogists contact a town hall first – because those requesting information (whether or not a citizen of Connecticut) would never know whether an appointment is necessary before research.

***If you have ever attempted to telephone a vital record office of most any city/county/state, you know that this would make research a nightmare.***

*(The logistics of this could be eased by the use of interactive online scheduling programs, which input appointments and update changes immediately as they are entered by users; but that assumes everyone has access to and skills or assistance using a computer and the internet. Helpful, but not sufficient.)*

*Whatever the situation (widespread or not) which provoked the writing of this bill, I believe that amending a state law to handle it is excessive both in curtailing the public's right to public information and in the waste of taxpayer's money by its consumption of legislators' time & focus displaced from the many far more pressing issues before them.*

*I hope this bill is defeated quickly.*

*Respectfully,  
Mrs. Donna Kelly*

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